

OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGETS

FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2004

Prepared By:

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Mission Statement

Our Mission is to create an effective and cost efficient network of County Government services that is responsive to local needs and perpetuates a lifestyle of quality for present and future generations. In performing this task, we are committed to executing our duties with the utmost integrity and in a manner that generates trust and confidence between our Public Officials and Employees and the County's Residents and Taxpayers.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Gregory M. Dunn, Chairman

Linda Wells, Vice Chair

Herbert E. Frady

Peter Pfeifer

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GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

*Distinguished
Budget Presentation
Award*

PRESENTED TO

**Fayette County
Georgia**

For the Fiscal Year Beginning
July 1, 2002

President

Executive Director

The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) presented an award of Distinguished Presentation to Fayette County for its annual budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2002.

In order to receive this award, a governmental unit must publish a budget document that meets program criteria as a policy document, as an operations guide, as a financial plan and as a communication device.

The award is valid for a period of one year only. We believe our current budget continues to conform to program requirements, and we are submitting it to GFOA to determine its eligibility for another award.

**FAYETTE COUNTY, GEORGIA
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Where Quality Is A Lifestyle

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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W. R. McNally, Attorney

Carol Chandler, Executive Assistant

Fiscal Year 2004 Budget Message

June 26, 2003

The Honorable Greg Dunn, Chairman

The Honorable Members of the Fayette County Board of Commissioners and
The Citizens of Fayette County, Georgia

INTRODUCTION

Transmitted herein is the County's FY 2003 - 2004 annual operating budget. With appropriations totaling \$66,018,636, this budget is representative of the County's long-standing tradition of fiscal and managerial conservatism. The Board of Commissioners and its staff continue to identify and allocate scarce resources in a manner that most effectively, efficiently, and economically meets the dynamic service needs of a growing Metropolitan Atlanta suburban community with a current estimated population of approximately 99,560. Major components of the approved budget include \$44,339,487 for General Fund activities, \$8,858,236 for Special Revenue Fund activities and \$12,820,913 for Enterprise Fund activities.

BUDGET IN BRIEF

The adopted operating budgets for FY 2004 total \$66,018,636. This year's budget is actually \$1,095,181 less than the previous fiscal year's budget level. Consistent with a principle of fiscal conservatism, the operating budget for FY 2004 is 1.63% less than the FY 2003 budget level. While appropriations are lower than previous fiscal year levels, services will continue to be first class through innovation and continuous effort to improve. It is important to note the planned buildup of staffing in several key functions during FY 2003 well prepared the County for the immediately foreseeable future. Therefore, staff has recommended a reduction of property tax rates to the Board of Commissioners. Several other significant items in this year's budget are described below.

Significant Items In This Year's Budget

- **Criminal Justice Center Funding.** On June 1, 2000 the Fayette County Public Facilities Authority issued \$55,250,000 in Revenue Bonds for the Criminal Justice Center Project. This jail expansion and judicial center construction will require \$3,840,551 in debt service funding during FY 2004.
- **Impact Fees.** Due to rapid population growth in the area, Fayette County is experiencing a strain on its service delivery strategies and existing infrastructure. The County has

implemented fire impact fees to fund capital expenses attributable to new development. New fire station construction will be partially funded by these fees. Before the end of FY 2004, two new fire stations will be serving the Fire Service District. Authorized positions are adequate to staff these facilities and are included in this budget.

- Workers' Compensation Self-Insurance Fund. The Board of Commissioners reviewed the current fund balance and determined that the existing reserve was sufficient for the coming year. Therefore, no contributions will be made into this fund during FY 2004.
- Personnel Costs. Two initiatives are funded in this year's budget. The first initiative provided a cost-of-living adjustment for employees. The second initiative continues funding for a pay-for-performance appraisal system. These initiatives are incorporated in the FY 2004 budget requests and recommendations.
 1. Cost-of-Living Adjustment. The Board voted to continue an annual cost-of-living allowance (COLA) adjustment to the pay plan to ensure that employees maintain their current buying power, to be updated on July 1, 2003. Costs were projected based upon 2.4 % increase for this purpose.
 2. Performance Appraisal System. Included is funding for continuation of a "Pay-For-Performance" annual review system to reward employees based on efforts and accomplishments. Costs were projected based upon historical data of FY 2003.

Budget Highlights

Personnel

- Authorized Positions. During the FY 2004 budget process, no new positions were authorized in the final approved budget. Several departments requested additional personnel; however, none were recommended by the staff or approved by the Board of Commissioners. During the FY 2003 budget process, new personnel positions were authorized in anticipation of increased service delivery demands associated with opening the new criminal justice center and jail. As a result, no increases to position authorizations were authorized by the Board of Commissioners during the FY 2004 budget process for these functions since adequate staffing was available to meet anticipated service delivery needs.
- Cost-of-Living Allowance. This budget includes funding to implement a 2.4% cost-of-living allowance, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for calendar year 2002, to be effective July 1, 2003, for all employees. Elected officials are not included because most receive cost-of-living allowances through the State minimum salary calculation formula used by the County.
- Performance Appraisal System. Included is funding for continuation of a "Pay-For-Performance" annual review system. For FY 2004, salaries and personnel related costs are projected based on the historical averages (i.e., 3% on a scale of 0% to 5%) effective on each employee's current merit date.
- Performance Measurement. Work continues toward a system based on department missions being linked to the organization's mission and establishing department goals, objectives, and input and outcome measures. Implementation is occurring in phases and some departments have included new measures in their budget submissions. These measures appear in the individual function sections after the Workload Indicator measures.
- Employee Training. Funds are included to provide instructors for updating employees on the use of popular software packages such as Windows, WordPerfect, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access.

Capital Improvements

- ♦ Pay-As-You-Go Capital Improvement Plan. In an effort to avoid the costly issuance of debt and its associated annual expenses, to the extent possible, Fayette County has adopted a pay-as-you-go capital improvement plan to meet most of its capital needs. Pay-as-you-go financing is defined as the utilization of all sources of revenue other than debt issuance (i.e., fund balance contributions, developer contributions, grants, donations, etc.) to fund its capital improvements plan.
- ♦ Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan. The development of a five-year plan to identify infrastructure needs has long been a goal for Fayette County. Recently, staff presented a proposed five year Capital Improvement Plan which is based upon the County's Comprehensive Planning Process. The Board of Commissioners adopted a Five Year Capital Improvement Program during budget deliberations for FY 2004.
- ♦ Judicial Complex. In order to address a jail overcrowding issue and ensure an efficient court system, the County has recently completed construction of additional jail space, a jail administration building, and a three-story judicial complex and parking lot. The move into the new facility was made in the fourth quarter FY 2003. Plans to staff and operate the facility have been incorporated into the FY 2004 budget. Included in the FY 2004 budget is \$3,840,551 in funding for debt service for revenue bonds for these projects.
- ♦ Fire Stations. This budget includes funding for pay-as-you-go construction costs associated with construction of the final two fire stations of a four station construction plan. New fire stations are needed to replace antiquated, outmoded facilities and at new sites to improve emergency response times in some areas. A portion of the needed funding will be paid from impact fees and from the tax revenues of the fire fund.
- ♦ Emergency 911 Communications. Because of the Federal Communications Commission's decision to sell certain 800 Mhz frequencies to the private sector, the County's E-911 function has made plans to migrate from the existing system to an 821 Mhz frequency. This spectrum has been "protected" by the FCC and will serve the needs of the County into the near future. In order to implement the new 821 Mhz system, the Board of Commissioners authorized construction of this project during the FY 2004 budget process. This system will cost \$7,760,000 and is financed as a lease purchase acquisition. The debt service associated with this project will be about \$993,762 during FY 2004. Upon completion of the new system, maintenance and operations costs are expected to increase about \$210,000 in the first full year of operation. In exchange, more than ninety five percent of the service delivery area will have emergency radio coverage. This will improve public safety communications throughout the County significantly.
- ♦ Senior Center. The \$25,000 annual appropriation to the Senior Citizen Construction Capital Projects Fund is included in this budget. The County has provided three acres of land and \$25,000 a year for the past nine years towards the construction of a new senior center. In addition, Fayette Senior Services has plans to construct a new 21,000 square foot multipurpose senior center and is seeking private donations and grants for this purpose.
- ♦ Geographic Information System (GIS) Technology and Digital Mapping. Funding is provided for the continued implementation of a GIS program to allow the County to continue creating digitized information about its infrastructure and to obtain all property information from one source. Various departments will be able to utilize the digitized map data that is being prepared from aerial photography and associate specific information such as zoning, topography, improvements, land use and the location of infrastructure with each individual parcel.
- ♦ Vehicle Replacement Fund. In order to maintain a safe, serviceable fleet of vehicles that meets the operational needs of the various County Departments, the County maintains a Vehicle Replacement Fund. In lieu of budgeting replacement vehicles as part of the

operating budget, all of the participating departments are assessed an amount equal to one year's depreciation on their fleet. These monies are then transferred to the Vehicle Replacement Fund where they are invested until needed to purchase the replacement unit.

The following table shows the FY 2004 adopted budget compared with the FY 2003 adopted budget, detailed by funds.

Fayette County, Georgia Operating Budget Comparison FY 2003 and FY 2004 By Fund			
FUND	FY 2003	FY 2004	% Change
General Fund	\$44,658,759	\$44,339,487	-.72%
Special Revenue Funds			
Fire Fund	6,667,301	6,065,326	-9.03%
Street Lights	161,150	181,650	12.72%
State Confiscated Property	97,200	59,500	-38.79%
U.S. Customs	-	9,200	100.00%
Jail Construction	600,000	310,000	-48.33%
Juvenile Supervision	46,100	40,300	-12.58%
Victims Assistance	147,533	197,375	33.78%
Drug Abuse Treatment and Education	54,296	67,566	24.44%
Law Library	19,976	19,976	0.00%
Federal Confiscated Property	129,665	195,100	50.47%
Library S.P.L.O.S.T.	316,600	158,000	-50.10%
Emergency 911	1,478,172	1,554,243	5.15%
Enterprise Funds			
Solid Waste	179,883	171,801	-4.5%
Water System	12,557,182	12,649,112	0.73%
Total Operating Budget	\$67,113,817	\$66,018,636	-1.63%

REVENUES

- ♦ User Fees. County departments reviewed all user fees and charges that they collect to ensure that they represent the recovery of all direct and indirect costs of service, unless full cost recovery would be excessively burdensome on those citizens receiving the service. Departments submitted schedules of recommended fees for the upcoming fiscal year. The Board reviewed and adopted fees necessary to assure recovery of appropriate costs as part of the FY 2004 budget process.
- ♦ Impact Fees. The County has instituted fire impact fees to help fund capital expenses attributable to new development. Because the amount to be collected is uncertain, this was not included as a revenue source.
- ♦ Property Taxes. The property tax continues to be the most significant revenue source for the General Fund and the Fire Fund. As a means of funding current, capital outlay, debt service and intergovernmental expenditures as they relate to the service level for the fiscal year, the County sets its maintenance and operations (M&O) millage rate at an amount which corresponds to that year's revenue production capacity. It is the intent of the Board to keep this millage rate constant and to avoid sudden changes in the millage rate.
- ♦ Taxpayer Relief Act. The continuation of homestead exemption will continue to have a favorable impact on property taxes.
- ♦ Taxpayer Bill of Rights. In keeping with Taxpayers' Bill of Rights legislation, the County will factor its millage rate by the net impact of reassessments on tax revenues or will hold the required public hearings to notify the public of any proposed tax increase as a result of the reassessed value of property.

FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

Fayette County's finances remain healthy given its conservative budgeting policies and tax revenue growth. Growth in the tax base has enabled the County to reduce its property tax rate for operating purposes significantly over the last decade. The County has the highest median household income in the State, one of the lowest millage and sales tax rates in the metro-area, and one of the lowest unemployment rates in Georgia. Fayette County's success with managing growth and planning for the future is highlighted by the recognition associated with the County's attainment of its 'AA' bond rating in spite of its relatively small size.

Fund Balances and Financial Reserves

A measure of financial strength is the level of Fayette County's fund balances (i.e., excess of current assets over current liabilities). A second indicator of the County's financial strength is the level of its financial reserves. The County's estimated unreserved fund balance in the General Fund will amount to approximately \$24,948,278 million as of June 30, 2003. The fund balance of the General Fund is budgeted to decrease in FY 2004 by \$2,201,902. This is primarily due to funding in the amount of \$3,179,295 for one-time capital improvements during the current fiscal year. The County's Special Revenue Funds will have a combined fund balance of approximately \$6,167,398 at the end of FY 2003. The County currently has Workers' Compensation Self-Insurance Fund reserves totaling \$2,950,424, Dental Self-Insurance Fund reserves totaling \$280,945, and Major Medical Self-Insurance Fund reserves totaling \$1,599,984. These funds will be used to help protect the County against potential claims.

Bond Ratings

The County's bond rating is further evidence of its financial strength. In March of 2003 Standard & Poor's upgraded the Fayette County Public Facilities Authority's \$55.250 million Series 2000 Revenue Bonds (Criminal Justice Center Project) from AA- to AA. Standard & Poor's upgrade was based in part on continued strong financial performance and position along with the anticipated completion of the capital improvement plan. A large tax base that continues to exhibit strong growth, high wealth levels, with the median household effective buying income at 152% of the state and national level also were cited as rationale for the upgrade in the bond rating. The rating is partly tempered by continued strong population growth, which is expected to necessitate an ongoing increase in County services as well as capital-related expenditures.

MAJOR POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

As the population continues to grow, planning for continued growth will be integral to the County's ability to maintain the desired level of services on a qualitative basis. Several areas have been targeted for long-term planning during the current fiscal year. Long-term planning efforts include the development of a transportation study as well as a recreation needs assessment. From a policy perspective, these planning efforts will result in significant capital improvement projects to address anticipated service delivery demands over the next twenty-five year time span. The Board of Commissioners will face policy issues regarding the desired level of services, environmental issues, land-use, economic impact, and public financing of these proposed projects. These are some of the major policy issues likely to be modified as the County proceeds toward a long-term planning process.

In addition, the Board of Commissioners recently combined the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan and the Land Use Plan to improve the effectiveness of these two critical planning objectives. Further the Capital Improvement Plan is linked to the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan/Land Use Plan to assure a cohesive planning effort exists between the two plans. The County is moving to a distinct set of action plans that are developed in unison with each other and are clearly linked to the County's overall mission.

Transportation Planning

The County Commission is engaged in an effort to update the transportation plan. An expected outcome of the transportation plan will be identification of deficiencies in the delivery of transportation services within Fayette County. Another outcome of this plan will be the development of proposed solutions to address deficiencies that exist in the delivery of transportation services. This planning effort focuses on a time-span over the next twenty-five year period. Regardless of the planning efforts, the real key to transportation improvement over the next quarter century in Fayette County will require a diligent effort to articulate the needs in a concise manner, plan for financing of the identified projects, work with regional partners at the local, state, and federal level to develop a grass-roots consensus of support for the recommended course of action. Perhaps the most important aspect of the planning effort will be the timely implementation of the desired improvements to the transportation infrastructure within Fayette County once the projects are approved and financing is complete.

Recreation Planning

The County Commission is engaged in an effort to update the recreation plan. An expected outcome of the recreation plan will be identification of deficiencies in the delivery of recreation services within Fayette County. Another outcome of this plan will be the development of proposed solutions to address deficiencies that exist in the delivery of recreation services. This planning effort focuses on a time-span over the next twenty-five year period. Regardless of the planning efforts, the real key to recreational opportunity improvement over the next quarter century in Fayette County will require a diligent effort to articulate the needs in a concise manner, to plan for financing of the identified projects, to partner with volunteer and community organizations and to coordinate efforts with other governments within the County, as well as the County Board of Education. The last outcome of the recreation plan involves determining the impact of the capital outlay request on the enhancement of services. Examples are the addition of lights to a ballfield or the purchase of playground equipment for a park. These expenditures enhance the investment the County already has at an individual site.

It is intended that the recreational needs assessment will provide the needed information to direct the County's provision of leisure space and facilities through the next twenty-five years. This plan will identify a unified delivery program for recreation which will lead to a consensus of support for the recommended course of action. The most important aspect of the planning effort will be the timely implementation of the desired improvements to the recreation facilities within Fayette County once identified, approved and financing is complete.

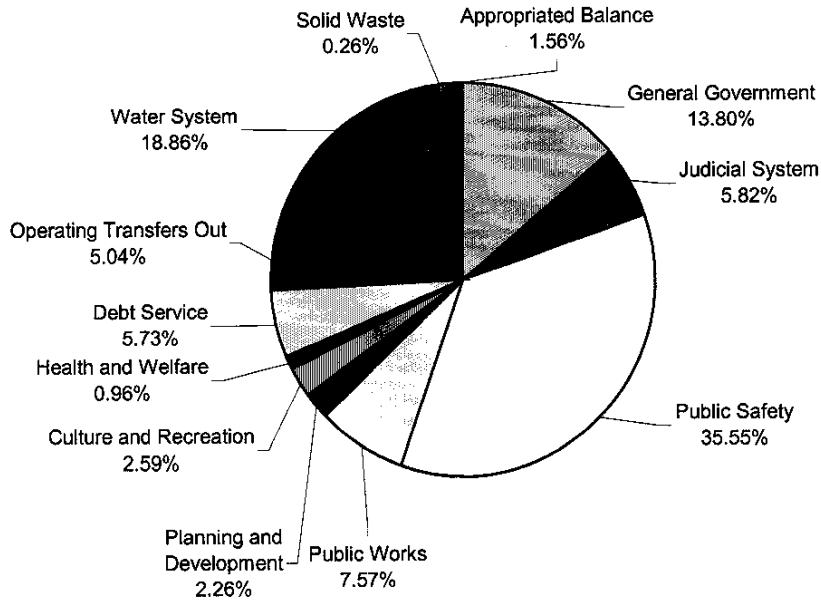
Short-Term Budget Policies

Short-term budget policies for FY 2004 have been established by the Board of Commissioners and are contained in a separate section within the Policies and Procedures section of the Budget Document. These policies are entitled Principal Budget Development Guidelines. The policies include a Revenue section with guidelines for projections, property taxes, user fees, and impact fees. The Expenditure section includes guidelines concerning general direction, additional personnel, vehicle replacement program, computer equipment replacement, and the pay-as-you-go capital improvement plan. The Provision of Services section discusses the full range of County services, Public Safety services, and responsibilities in the budget process. The Fund Balance section provides guidelines concerning maintaining existing fund balances and increasing fund balances.

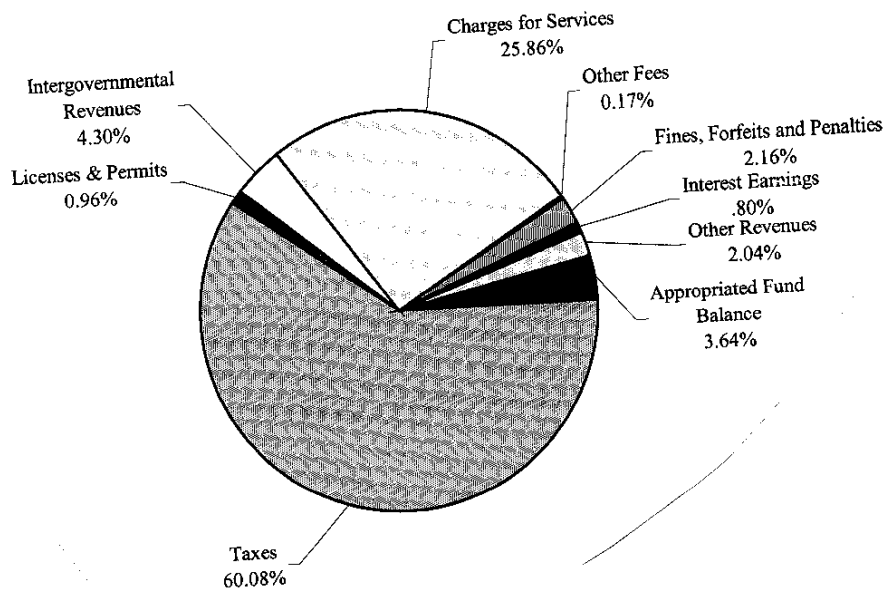
REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES AT A GLANCE

The following two pie charts depict major revenues by type and major expenditures by functional area. The first chart portrays major revenue sources: taxes of \$40,292,112; licenses and permits of \$644,500; fines, forfeitures and penalties of \$1,449,300; user fees and charges totaling \$17,343,361, and intergovernmental revenues of \$2,881,287. The second chart represents the largest expenditures by functional area: Public Safety including fire protection, \$23,842,171; Water System (an enterprise fund), \$12,649,112; General Government \$9,256,163; and Public Works, \$5,078,923.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY FUNCTION



SUMMARY OF REVENUES BY TYPE



CONCLUSION

As a result of many years of prudent decision-making and fiscal conservatism, Fayette County will maintain its strong fiscal position for the foreseeable future. The Board has maintained a high level of service for the public while consistently eliminating waste and unnecessary activity. The County has adequate fund balances to meet emergency needs. The County consistently meets or exceeds its revenue expectations and rarely exceeds expenditure estimates. From an organizational standpoint, Fayette County has positioned itself to lead the Metropolitan Atlanta area in innovation, fiscal conservatism and quality of life.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris W. Cofty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris W. Cofty
County Administrator

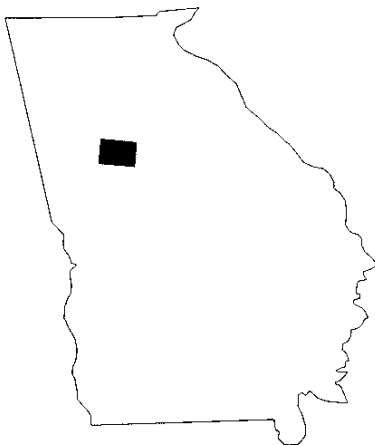
SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COUNTY



The County provides a full range of services to its citizens. These services include police and fire protection; emergency medical services; court systems; library services; the construction and maintenance of highways, streets and infrastructure; tax assessment and collection; planning and zoning; recreational activities and cultural events; and inherent administrative and support activities. The reason that the majority of these services are provided by the County is that State statutes affix fiscal responsibility for its provision at the local level. However in keeping with the terms of their individual charters, the cities and towns have chosen to provide some of the above services to their citizens as part of their operations.

The County also operates a potable water distribution system and a solid waste management system. The Water System was established in 1966 and serves approximately 24,096 customers in the unincorporated areas of the County and through the County-owned distribution systems of the City of Peachtree City and the Towns of Tyrone and Woolsey. The Water System also wholesales water to the City of Fayetteville and the Town of Brooks pursuant to wholesale water contracts which expire in 2034 and 2024, respectively.

PROFILE OF THE COUNTY



State of Georgia

Fayette County, established in 1821, is a body corporate and politic organized and existing under the Constitution and laws of the State of Georgia. Fayette County was the 49th county created in the state and was formed from parts of the Creek Indian Territory. The County and Fayetteville, the county seat, were named for the Marquis De LaFayette, one of General George Washington's lieutenants in the Revolutionary War.

Encompassing about 199 square miles, it is one of the smaller counties in the State in area. It is located in the northwestern part of Georgia, situated about 15 miles south of the Atlanta city limits and is considered an integral part of the Metro Atlanta area. From a long-range planning standpoint, it is a member of the Atlanta Regional Commission. The County is in the 8th and 13th Congressional District; 17th, 28th and 34th State Senatorial Districts; and 48th,

85th and 86th State House Districts based on September 2001 redistricting. .

Fayette County is bordered on the north by Fulton County with Atlanta as its county seat, on the east by Clayton County with Jonesboro as its county seat, on the south by Spalding County with Griffin as its county seat, and on the west by Coweta County with Newnan as its county seat.

Fayette County is considered to be a suburban community. About 50 percent of its residents live in incorporated cities and towns. Fayette is the Atlanta region's third least densely populated county, with 0.70 people living per acre of land. The average household size is 2.88 and approximately 86.4 percent of housing is defined as owner occupied.

Fayette County exhibits some excellent physical characteristics. Average rainfall for the immediate area is 48.61 inches per year, and average temperatures range from a high of 87 degrees in the summer to a low of 34 degrees in the winter, with a year round average temperature of 61.4 degrees. The area is decorated with dogwoods and azaleas blooming in the spring and a colorful change of leaves in the fall. The general terrain of the area is characteristic of the Piedmont region of Georgia, with hills with broad ridges, sloping uplands and relatively narrow valleys. Land elevations within the County range from a low of 720 to a high of 1,005 feet above sea level.

Another important attribute of Fayette County is its location in relationship to major transportation modes, with ready access to several different methods of conveyance. The County is strategically located in proximity to three major interstate highway systems, I-75, I-285 and I-85. In addition, several principal arterial roadways, such as State Highways 54, 74, 85, 92, 279 and 314, pass directly through the County. Citizens also have fairly easy access to the public transportation systems which serve the immediate Atlanta area. From terminals located in the southern part of Fulton County, travelers can take advantage of the trains and buses operated by the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). For a very reasonable fare, MARTA offers residents the alternative of an easy, quick commute to Downtown Atlanta or to the various sports venues. And from the private sector, the Greyhound Bus Lines operates a local terminal in nearby Hapeville.

Other transportation needs can also be easily accommodated. For any business needing to move freight, there is direct railway service which is provided by CSX Railroad. In addition, Amtrak has passenger trains which pass through nearby Atlanta. For international shipping, Savannah, Georgia and Jacksonville, Florida serve as major deep-water seaports which can be easily reached by interstate highway in a matter of hours. Hartsfield - Atlanta International Airport, the world's busiest, is located only about 15 miles to the north and Falcon Field Airport which is located on the western fringes of the County serves as a local public airport for light aircraft including small jets.

In spite of its relatively small size in terms of area, Fayette County offers its residents a diverse menu of lifestyles, amenities and opportunities. Peachtree City, a planned community situated in the western part of the County, is widely known as a family-oriented locale. This City features three golf courses, two large lakes, 80 miles of golf cart paths, a 2,000 seat amphitheater, a state-of-the-art championship tennis center, an indoor swimming complex and numerous other recreational facilities. The majority of industry in the County is located in a nearby industrial park.

Fayetteville, the County seat, boasts of its Main Street Program aimed at recognizing the rich history of the City's downtown area and ensuring that much of the small town flavor and architectural designs of the past are maintained. And with street names like Stonewall, Beauregard, Lee and Jeff Davis and buildings such as the Doc Holliday House, one can't help but feel surrounded by history.

For those in search of a more pastoral environment, the Towns of Brooks and Woolsey, located in the southern portion of the County, generally require a minimum residential lot size of five-acres. In Fayette County, one can find a high-tech industrial complex and an airport located just a few minutes drive from cattle farms, woodlands full of deer and turkey, and a historic water mill.

GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE



The governing authority of Fayette County is a Board of Commissioners consisting of five elected members. The commissioners serve on a part-time basis and are elected to staggered terms of four years. While all five commissioners are elected at large, three must come from the different road districts within the County. At their first meeting each calendar year, the Commission Chair and Vice-Chair are selected by the Board.

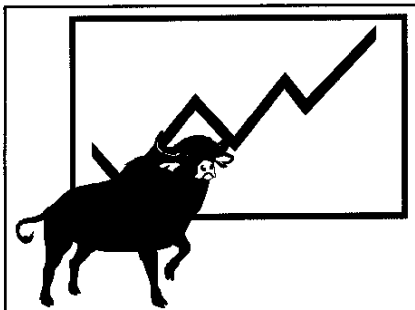
In their policy making capacity, the Board of Commissioners is authorized to perform the following functions:

- 1) levy taxes;
- 2) direct and control all property of the County;
- 3) establish, alter or abolish roads and bridges;
- 4) fill vacancies in County offices unless others are empowered to do so;
- 5) examine, settle and allow claims against the County;
- 6) examine and audit the accounts of all officers having the care, management, keeping, collection or disbursement of money belonging to the County;
- 7) establish the costs of licenses; and
- 8) make such rules and regulations as necessary for the protection and preservation of health, safety, welfare and morals.

The Board of Commissioners appoints the County Administrator who serves as the County's chief administrative officer (CAO). The County Administrator is then responsible for the daily operations of all County functions in accordance with the policies of the Board of Commissioners.

LOCAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND OUTLOOK

Fayette County continues to benefit economically by being an integral part of one of the top growth areas in the United States. The Metropolitan Atlanta region represents one of the nation's primary transportation and distribution centers as well as being a major financial and consumer services leader. Georgia's geographically central location for domestic distribution, excellent surface transportation system, telecommunications infrastructure and proximity to major consumer markets make the state an excellent base for air cargo operations.



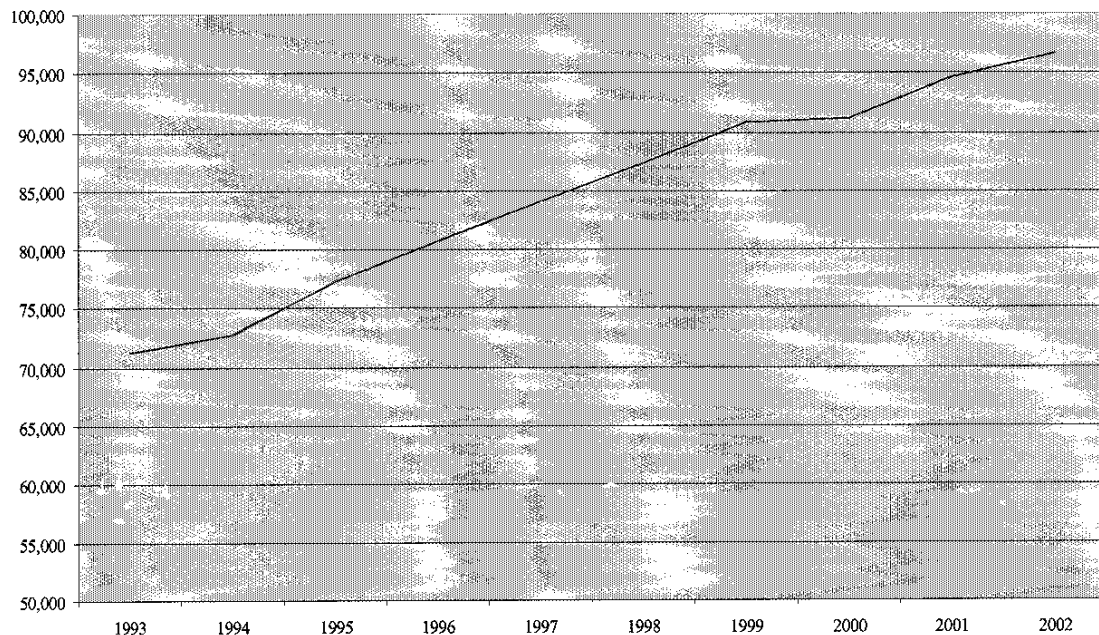
The quality and quantity of services provided by the County to its residents are second to none. In Fayette County, one will find the top ranked school system in Georgia, the lowest crime rate in the Metro-Atlanta area, and an efficient

County government with one of the lowest millage rates and service costs per capita in the State. Each of these quality of life factors combine to make the County an extremely attractive place in which to reside.

The County has become well known, not only regionally but nationally, as an ideal place in which to live and to work. For the previous four years that the award was available, the Georgia Trend magazine named Fayette County the "Blue Chip County" of the Atlanta region. In the publication, The Guide - 1999, Fayette County was referred to as "Atlanta's Crown Jewel" and "one of Georgia's premier counties". Also in 1999, Fayette industries received a unique double honor when the Georgia Economic Developers Association recognized Florida Rock as the best small industry in the state and Hoshizaki America as the best large one. This occurrence represented the first time that two industries from a single county had been so honored.

Fayette's much sought after quality of life has even captured the attention of the American Demographics magazine which identified Fayette County in 1991 as "America's Hottest County" and later, as one of America's "Most Comfortable Counties". A March 1994 article in the Wall Street Journal listed Fayette County as the second fastest growing county in America in a study of the twenty hottest counties nationwide based on education levels, median income and the ability of young professionals to own new homes.

FAYETTE: Trend of Population Growth

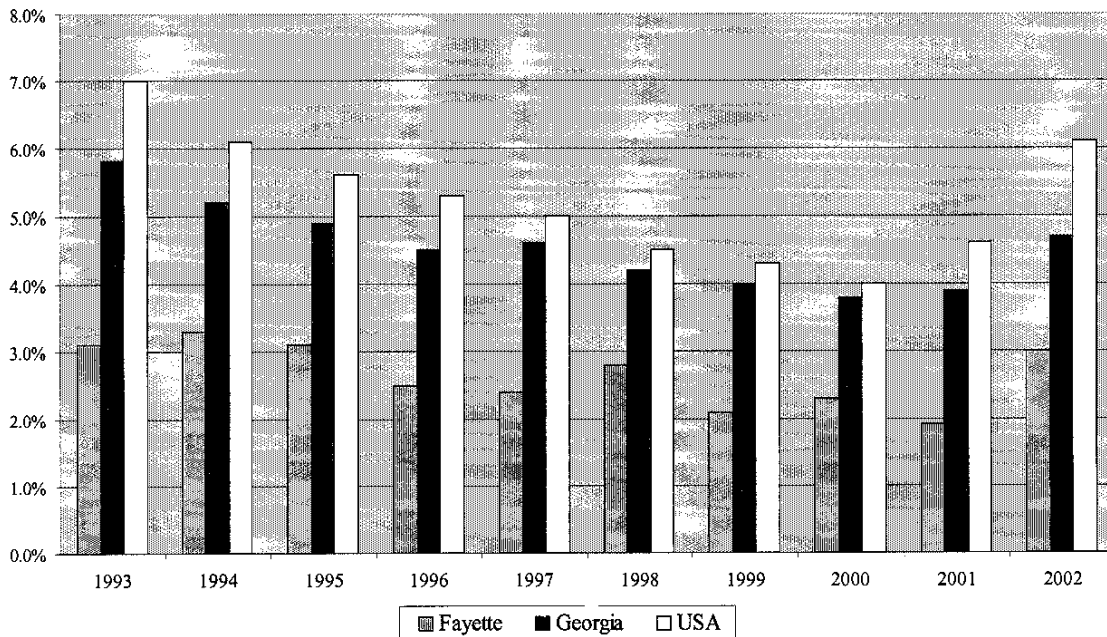


The attractiveness of Fayette County as a place to live has not just received lip service from people. According to the 1980 census figures, Fayette County had 29,043 residents and was the forty-third most populous county in the State of Georgia. Results from the 2000 census indicate that the number of citizens had risen to 91,263. Based on the current trends, the Atlanta Regional Commission estimates that the population of the County will be 133,100 in 2010 and 174,100 in 2020. The graph above depicts the population growth in Fayette County over the last ten years.

In terms of productivity, Fayette County is extremely blessed to have a labor force that is very diverse, is well trained and has many marketable skills. More than 56 percent of our current residents 25 or older have attended college. The average SAT scores at local high schools are well above the national average. The superior quality of our workforce is supported by the monthly statistics prepared by the Georgia Department of Labor (DOL) which indicate that the County consistently has low unemployment rates. This is demonstrated by the above chart comparing the unemployment rate for Fayette County, the State of Georgia, and the United States for the last ten years.

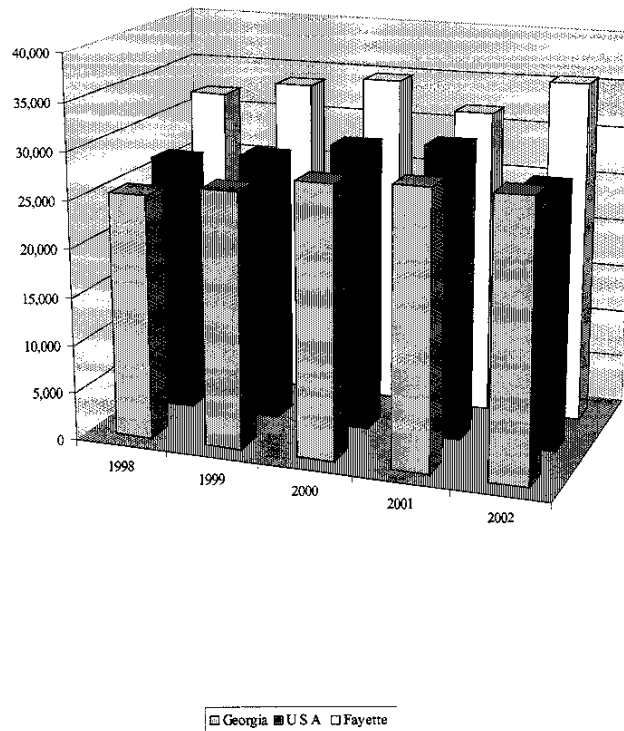
As one might suspect from having such a significant percentage of residents permanently

Unemployment Rate Comparison



employed, the citizens of Fayette County are among the more affluent in the country. The graph on the next page compares the Personal Per Capital Income of the residents of Fayette County with those of Georgia and the rest of the nation for the last five years.

Personal Per Capita Income



As the population and number of skilled workers have continued to grow over the years, the demographics are now such that businesses are being attracted to the area in increasing numbers. And with the arrival of each new business, additional employment opportunities and spendable income are created in the County. It is also important to note that the business climate in Fayette County is conducive to sustained, quality growth. In recent years, the Fayette County Development Authority has been active in efforts to attract new industries to the County including both high-tech as well as industries from the aviation sector. The Fayette County Development Authority has formed a partnership with six other adjacent counties-Metro South- for the specific purpose of promoting regional development. Recently, a citizen's committee in concert with staff has been reviewing all of the County's ordinances in an attempt to eliminate unnecessary regulations and streamline the necessary processes. To help encourage residential development, a one-stop building permit process has been developed in-house.

Another very important attribute to the immediate area is that Atlanta's industrial diversity insulates the region against upheavals in a single market or decisions by a few major employers. Even with the increasing pre-eminence of the services sector of the economy, no single sector accounts for as much as 30 percent of the region's employment. Added benefits of recent growth include the availability of more high-quality products, services and talent. A critical mass of skilled workers in a variety of technical fields encourages innovations and entrepreneurship. The growth of several major research universities has also helped to foster economic development in the area.

On the retail front, the Fayette Pavilion project located north of Fayetteville on Highway 85 continues to expand. Sitting on a 110-acre site, the shopping center has brought to Atlanta's south-side the hottest trend in retail - the power center. Home Depot, Target, Rhodes Furniture, Goody's, Wal-Mart Superstore, Marshalls, Old Navy, The Sports Shoe, Sports Authority, Publix Grocery Store, Belks, Shoe Carnival, Men's Wearhouse, PetsMart, Ross, Casual Corner and Kohl's Department Store are just some of the larger retail businesses which have opened in the initial phases. The developer has obtained commitments from such upscale merchants as Eddie Bauer, Ann Taylor, Victoria's Secret, The Gap, and the Limited.

And as draws for the non-shoppers, there are several restaurants, two coffee shops, a seventeen-screen movie theater and even a soon to be built ice-skating rink. To further enhance the attractiveness of this particular area of the County, plans for several adjacent tracts of land include the construction of a hotel, conference center and additional restaurants. The new power center is really proving to be a retail development magnet as additional businesses are seeking to become part of the project or to locate nearby. Across Highway 85 from the Fayette Pavilion is the Uptown Square shopping center with a Barnes & Noble bookstore, Linens & Things and a Ruby Tuesday restaurant. Kinko's, Lowes, Office Depot, and Hi Fi Buys are examples of other new businesses which have opened in close proximity to the Fayette Pavilion.

However, the retail growth that is occurring isn't confined to only this one location. On the south side of Fayetteville, the Towne Center shopping center offers the convenience of a large grocery store, an auto repair shop, several restaurants as well as other retail and service stores to residents of the southern parts of the County. In fiscal year 2003 Fayetteville saw the grand opening of The Villages Amphitheater, a 2,000 seat amphitheater owned by the Downtown Development Authority and run by the Main Street Tourism Association. This is a part of a large multi-use upscale residential and commercial development under construction near the center of the City. It is anticipated that the three private builders will construct multi-family, condominiums, and large single family dwellings. There are plans for additional commercial development and a hotel to be built along Highway 54 near this project.

In Peachtree City, the Kedron Village shopping center has grocery and retail stores, several banks, speciality shops and restaurants. Retail growth is booming with the opening of The Avenue, a \$30.7 million, 178,000 square-foot shopping center. Shops at this location include Ted Turner's Montana Grill, The Gap, Gap Kids clothing store, Talbots, Jos. A. Banks, Williams-Sonoma, Victoria's Secret, and Banana Republic. Home Depot and a Wal-Mart Superstore recently opened at a nearby site.

Much of this retail growth is simply a reflection of the additional buying power of the new residents and commuter employees associated with those businesses who are moving into the County. Cooper Lighting, a division of Cooper Industries, has its world headquarter in a 485,000 square foot facility located in Peachtree City. This is both a service as well as distribution center for the world's largest lighting manufacturer. Other local businesses include Southern Motor Carriers, the nation's leading provider of data software and technology solutions for transportation pricing, and Lawson Mardon Packaging. Also, Sigvaris built a 35,000 square foot facility employing 70 and representing an investment of \$7.5 million. Three aviation service support industries have recently relocated or have begun construction of new facilities in the Peachtree City area. Gardner Aviation is constructing a small aircraft parts distribution center. Adventure Aviation has moved into an existing warehouse near Falcon Field in Peachtree City. They will be operating a sales and distribution center dealing primarily with international imports and exports. Also near the entrance

to Falcon Field is Aircraft Spruce and Aviation who is building a center for distribution of parts for small private aircraft. Other examples of relocating career opportunities to the local area is the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Traffic Control's facility , a \$66 million investment, and the Atlanta Office of the National Weather Service which houses both the Weather Forecast Office as well as the Southeast River Forecast Center. Both are located in the Peachtree City area.

In summation, Fayette County is a growing area with favorable prospects for the future. While having a positive impact on the quality of life, this growth also presents challenges for Fayette County and its leaders. If the present high level of services is to be maintained for future citizens moving into the County, then Fayette County will need to continue to utilize new and innovative methods of ensuring economic prosperity and growth.

MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR FY 2004 AND THE FUTURE



For the Year. In preparing the 2004 fiscal year budget, the County was faced with hard challenges in regard to determining the proper balance between service delivery issues, financial stability, infrastructure needs, and taxpayer demands. At the same time that Fayette County was experiencing rapid population growth and a higher demand for services from its citizens, the

majority of taxpayers were asking for lower property taxes. Also there was some uncertainty about the future operating environment. As part of the revenue side of the funding equation, some economists were projecting a slow economic recovery from the current conditions. In terms of programming personnel expenditures, which is the largest single component of the budget, the low unemployment rate and scarcity of trained workers in the Metro-Atlanta area had combined to push starting salaries higher and higher.

With those basic operational pressures in mind, a conservative approach was taken in the preparation of this year's budget with increases in annual appropriations limited to the amount that was expected to be generated from the natural growth in revenues. The Board of Commissioners was also faced with a number of funding decisions concerning capital improvement projects that needed to be undertaken. In concert with these issues, certain basic parameters guided the development of the FY 2004 budget and enabled the achievement of these important goals:

- ☛ Maintaining the equity of the employees' compensation and benefit package with the current labor market,
- ☛ Ensuring the safe closure of the municipal waste landfill,
- ☛ Maintaining a stable property tax rate in support of Maintenance and Operations (M&O) millage rate,
- ☛ Funding the continued expansion of the Water System,
- ☛ Continuing the Vehicle Replacement Program,
- ☛ Improving the County's roadways,
- ☛ Continuation of the alternative fuel program for County vehicles,
- ☛ Enhancements in the Public Safety area,
- ☛ Setting aside monies for the funding of a capital improvements program,
- ☛ Maintaining the fiscal ability to provide for service level increases in response to service demand,
- ☛ Optimizing the use of new technologies and training,
- ☛ Adhering to prior financial commitments, and
- ☛ Minimizing the "Cost of Government" to the citizenry while continuing to be responsive to their needs.

Unquestionably, the most important asset of Fayette County is its employees. As part of the adopted personnel policies and procedures manual, the Human Resources Department is required to periodically compare the County's compensation and benefits package with those of the surrounding market. These external benchmarks are needed to insure that Fayette County is paying

its employees a salary that is commensurate with the specific duties being performed and in line with other governmental agencies as well as the private sector. The implementation of the findings from these periodic salary comparisons help guarantee that the County can hire and retain qualified employees.

A study conducted in 2002 by the consulting firm MGT of America, Inc. found that our salaries were below the market in several categories. As a result of this study, the Board of Commissioners provided funding necessary to correct the identified salary and wage deficiencies. In addition, the Board has an adopted policy to adjust compensation levels at the beginning of each fiscal year in order to keep employees salaries at a competitive level in those years between studies. Since the fiscal year 2001, our salary tables have been factored on an annual basis by a percentage, which approximates the financial impact of inflation on our employees' buying power. The annual increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is used as the multiplier factor to help keep our starting salaries more in line with the existing market. The percentage was 3.4%, 1.6% and 2.4% in FY 2002, FY 2003 and FY 2004 respectively.

Coupled with this new cost-of-living-allowance (COLA), the Board also made some changes to the annual employee review process. The goal of the Commissioners was to have annual merit raises provide a better reflection of the individual efforts of each worker. Basically, the Board wanted to reward those employees who were the most productive with the largest raises. To achieve that objective, the evaluation instrument that was used to evaluate the performance of employees was restructured to reflect a more objective measurement of how well assigned duties were being performed. Based on the numerical results of their annual performance evaluation, employees would receive raises, which would range from 0% to 5% in 1.25% increments.



For a number of years, Fayette County has prided itself on being one of the most efficient and effective governmental units in the country. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) prepares a report each year comparing expenditures by function for all counties and municipalities in the State of Georgia. This study generally places the County in the lowest expenditure per capita category in the delivery of services. The high productivity of our employees and reliance on cutting edge technology also allows the County to have one of the lowest millage rates in the State.

To maintain this "competitive" edge, the Commissioners have encouraged the utilization of new technologies and innovative ideas for conducting business. Modern personal computers, laptops and terminals connected to the mainframe can be found throughout every office. Voice mail, e-mail, citizen information boxes, and other telecommunication improvements have been initiated to help employees make more efficient use of their time.

An example of the County's commitment to technology are expenditures by the Water System over the last several fiscal years to replace all of the old water meters to radio read meters and installing a transponder and antenna for each. The entire conversion process will take four years to complete and will cost approximately \$3.5 million. When completed, this new technology is expected to greatly decrease the amount of time that it takes to read meters and increase the accuracy.

Also, FY 2000 saw Fayette County implement the infant stages of a Geographical Information System (GIS). The updating and upgrading of map information for the Tax Assessor's Office has provided a window of opportunity for the County to begin creating digitized information about its infrastructure and other attributes of real property. Various departments have been able to

take the digitized map data that is prepared from aerial photography and associate specific information such as zoning, topography, improvements, land use and the location of infrastructure with each individual parcel.

Funds were again included in the FY 2004 budget to provide training opportunities for the purpose of updating employees on the use of popular software packages such as Windows, WordPerfect, Powerpoint, Word, Excel and Access. To ensure that our employees take advantage of these classes, they are required to have a certain number of training hours each year. Edward Demmings, the forefather of modern business thought, summed up the County's strategic plan best when he said, "Work smarter, not harder".



As new residents continue to move into Fayette County, they bring with them an immediate impact on traffic flows. With each additional vehicle on the road, the potential for problems to develop increases as traffic counts begin to exceed existing road design capacities and intersections become overcrowded. The Sheriff's Office has been invaluable by helping to track the number, severity and cause of accidents and recording actual traffic flows at various trouble spots around the County. These public safety driven criteria have helped the

County identify, prioritize and determine funding of needed road projects. During the 2004 fiscal year, the Road Department has identified 8 projects totaling \$2,159,552 for road improvements, concrete bridge culvert construction, traffic control device installation and other road clearing, grading, widening and pavings. One of the major project totals \$1,467,602 is authorized for the construction of a road and bridge connecting Fayette County with Coweta County. The project has become known as TDK Boulevard. Upon completion, this project will greatly improve traffic safety in the general area by creating another alternative route to and from Eastern Coweta County in the Peachtree City area of Fayette County.



The Water System held the official dedication for the completion of the Lake Horton Reservoir on June 26, 1996. Located in the Southern portion of the county between the towns of Woolsey and Brooks, the Lake Horton project cost approximately \$18 million to construct which included the acquisition, construction of a 783-acre reservoir and the raw water lines needed to get the water to the Crosstown Water Treatment Plant. Lake Horton was created by the impoundment of the Woolsey and Antioch Creek basins.

Lake Horton has reached its full pool status and also provides the County with a valuable recreation site for the southern end of the County. The FY 2004 operating budget includes funding for the construction of pavilions, picnic tables, rest rooms and for paving of walking paths trails around the lake. The Water System completed the construction of the South Fayette Water Treatment Plant during 2001 which will ultimately handle the treating of the raw water obtained from Lake Horton. This plant will be able to treat six million gallons of water per day.

The Water System completed construction of a two million gallon water tank on Highway 92 during FY 2002 providing much needed additional storage capacity and higher water pressure for the eastern side of the County, including the City of Fayetteville. During FY 2003, the Water System completed construction of a two million gallon water tank on Highway 85 and on Ellis Road.

Because of the rapid pace of growth that has occurred in Fayette County in recent years, citizens have become more and more cognizant of the additional costs that are associated with the

upgrading of facilities and infrastructure necessary to provide the existing level of service to recent arrivals. To address this situation where the current residents are forced to help pay for those capital expenditures incurred due to the influx of new citizens, the Board decided to implement the collection of impact fees for new construction. After submission to and receiving final approval from



the Department of Community Affairs, during FY 2001 the County began collecting these fees from developers which approximate the financial impact of each new resident on the capital budget. These fees are being used for construction of fire stations.

The County completed construction during FY 2002 of a new facility to relocate Fire Station Number 1 which had been located below the downstream toe of a Category I dam. A FEMA Hazard and Mitigation grant was obtained in early FY 2000 to fund the construction of this critical facility out of harm's way. This facility contained suitable living quarters that replaces the existing station that was built for and during the time that we had an all volunteer fire department. An additional three stations were approved to be built that not only replaced antiquated, outmoded facilities but were built on sites that should improve emergency response times in those areas. Construction on these stations was completed during fiscal year 2003 with part of the cost being offset by the impact fees being collected.



Because of their significant impact on the annual budget and their importance in the delivery of effective services, the County began treating motor vehicles differently than other equipment during FY 1998. In lieu of budgeting replacement vehicles as part of the normal operating budget each year, all of the participating departments are assessed an amount equal to one year's depreciation on their fleet. These monies are then transferred to a separate fund where they will accumulate and be invested until such time as they are needed to purchase the replacement unit. In June of 1998, funds in the amount of \$3.95 million were transferred to cover the depreciation of the existing fleet associated with prior periods. Funding of this program is provided in the FY 2004 budget.

For the Future. It has been said that several of the factors which influence an individual's choice to reside in a particular place include the availability of services in the area, quality of life considerations, and community identity or image. The County is taking a proactive stance in addressing each of these three considerations. Enhancing the existing quality of life, creating a



FUTURE INITIATIVES

positive image for the County and engendering pride in the Fayette community continue to be a large part of the strategic plan of the Board of Commissioners. The transition of Fayette County from its rural heritage into a dynamic suburbanizing community requires careful planning and implementation of a comprehensive strategy designed to maximize governmental resources. It will not be an easy task to find the necessary funding to provide quality services for the additional 40,000 residents expected to relocate here over the next ten years. However, the Board and staff are strongly committed to finding the best possible solution to this

perplexing problem. As mentioned earlier, one very significant down side of rapid population growth is its adverse impact on the adequacy of facilities. As the demand for services increases over time, it results in making the existing plant obsolete. As more and more residents have moved to Fayette County each year and new businesses have opened their doors, it has placed a severe strain on the County's ability to safely house the current number of individuals that must be incarcerated. The County's judicial system has also grown to a level making the Courthouse Annex facility inadequate to house all of the court functions. The system had become inefficient and confusing by having various courts and related prosecutorial agencies located in buildings scattered near the Annex.

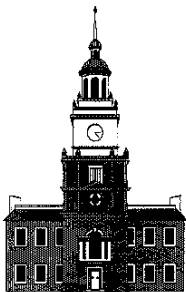
The Board concluded that there was a need to increase the number of cells at the jail and to construct a new judicial complex to house all the various court functions. The Board not only understood the need to optimize the utility of the existing structures but to also make plans for future needs as well. The County began to acquire several additional properties adjacent to the 33 acres of land that it already owned off Jimmy Mayfield Boulevard in FY 1999. Seven parcels totaling twenty-one acres were acquired at a total cost of \$1.4 million. A new 66-acre tract was created once the new parcels were acquired. The most recent acquisitions were lands that were contiguous to the existing jail and courthouse annex.

For long-range planning purposes, this site has been identified as the future home of all Fayette County government offices and should be sufficient in size to serve all of the citizens (i.e., approximately 200,000) that are expected to live in the County at the time of build-out. A site plan has already been developed for the entire parcel which identifies the location of all the buildings that could eventually be constructed as part of the governmental campus. For example, specific sites on the tract have been identified and set aside for a new Senior Citizens Center and a future Administrative Offices building. This "total project" approach ensures that the location of water and sewer lines, roads, utilities and parking lots is optimal.

In June of 2000, Fayette County entered into a lease-purchase agreement with the Fayette County Public Facilities Authority (PFA) for the construction of the new criminal justice center. As part of this funding arrangement, the PFA issued \$55,250,000 in revenue bonds and the County agreed to make annual lease payments in an amount equal to the debt service on the bonds. This method of financing was selected to be the most effective alternative for our citizens. Construction began in FY 2001 and was completed during FY 2003. The courts moved into the new facility in the spring of 2003.

One component of the criminal justice center project consisted of the expansion of the existing County jail to provide for an additional 384 beds. With the addition of two new pods or units, housing classification was divided into a cell-type medium security housing 192 beds and a dormitory-type, minimum security housing an additional 192 beds. To facilitate the level of care that

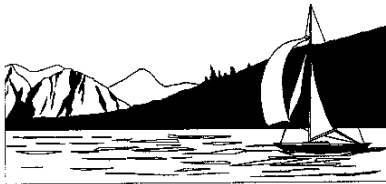
is required for a growing inmate population, a new 61,500 square foot jail support building was also constructed in order to manage the daily activities within the jail facilities. These jail support functions include intake and booking, bonding visitation, inmate property storage, central control, medical and dental examination, infirmary, kitchen, laundry, public access and visitation, record storage, administrative offices, and inmate transfer and release. This facility was completed and placed into service in the spring of 2003.



The second major element of this project was the construction of a new three-story, 150,000 square foot courthouse. The new building was constructed to house all of the existing County court facilities within the lower two floors of the facility. The third floor will be available for future internal expansion. The existing courthouse annex will be renovated to provide additional space for the Sheriff's Office once the current occupants have vacated. The new courthouse was completed and placed in service during the spring of 2003. The renovation of the existing courthouse annex will continue on into fiscal year 2004.

In planning for the long-range future, one physical attribute that carries with it the potential for severely limiting growth in Fayette County has been the lack of a major source for the provision of potable water. The construction of Lake Horton and the South Fayette Water Treatment Plant should certainly address this particular problem in the short-term. But with the population growth that is expected and the amount of time it requires to permit and construct a new reservoir under the existing laws and regulations, it is imperative that the County adequately plan for this rapid growth years in advance of it actually occurring.

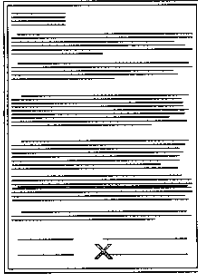
The major problem faced by the County in this service delivery area is that there are no rivers with significant flows that pass directly through the County. Suitable reservoir sites are limited because of the existing development and the relative flatness of the surrounding terrain which results in shallow ponds and lakes. In spite of these site limitations, the Board of Commissioners is continuing to plan and take all the necessary steps to ensure an adequate water supply for the future.



Situated in the southwest part of the County, the proposed new source of water, Lake McIntosh, will be built on Line Creek which separates Fayette County from Coweta County to the west. This impoundment will cover about 642 acres and will have an estimated capacity of eight million gallons per day available for treatment and distribution. All the necessary property at a total cost of \$1,668,000 has been acquired for the future construction of Lake McIntosh. By acquiring all of the needed land and easements now, the County is assured that any future development will not impact the availability of this site.

During recent fiscal years, the Board of Commissioners approved initiating the formal process required to obtain a 404 permit from the Corps of Engineers to build Lake McIntosh. The finished application package has been delivered and public meetings held to discuss the impact on fish and other wildlife. The Water system is continuing to review and mitigate the impact on the surrounding wetlands. A project team has been assembled and the basic site plans for the dam and spillway are complete. As of this date, the Water System has already completed all of the preliminary work that is required for the actual construction of this impoundment such as the archeological studies. Once the permit is approved, the Water System estimates that it will take at least two years to complete design and get the lake fully operational. This lake should provide our growing County's need for surface water well into the twenty-first century.

Several years ago, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) made the decision to sell certain 800 Mhz radio frequencies that had not been designated solely for public safety use. Unfortunately, Fayette County happens to have one of those frequencies that are being auctioned to the telecommunications companies. Consequently, the E-911 function has had to make application for one of the new 821 Mhz frequencies that are being allotted for public safety use. Moving to the



new system requires that all of the existing radio equipment have the capability of transmitting and receiving on the new frequency. In addition, the County will have to add seven transmission towers because of the smaller coverage area effected by the radio signals under this technology. As part of the 800 Mhz bidding process, the successful bidder will be required to financially assist the County with making the move to the new frequency.

One issue that has the potential to have a significant impact on the operations of Fayette County is House Bill 489. This piece of legislation, which was passed by the Georgia General Assembly, is intended to reduce the amount of service duplication on the part of local governments and to look at the issue of double taxation. The bill requires all local jurisdictions to examine how its various services are delivered, the cost of delivering those services and who pays for them. The ultimate goal of these discussions is to minimize the cost of services to the taxpayers. During past fiscal years, the County and the municipalities reviewed each of its services and prepared a service delivery analysis which was accepted by the Department of Community Affairs.

Through the requirements of this piece of legislation, jurisdictions are being encouraged to at least consider what could be achieved through better coordination of their service efforts. After examining the advantages and disadvantages of the possible service delivery options, such as consolidation of services, intergovernmental agreements, joint service delivery or the status quo, some progress has been made in making the operations of our local governments more efficient. However, this exercise also brought into focus the inherent differences between the way that the various entities' elected officials and staffs view revenues and services. The decisions that ultimately come out of this process will go a long way in determining how Fayette County operates in the future and what services it will continue to provide its citizens.

ANNUAL DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT



Office of the Clerk of Superior Court

As a part of our financial report each year, Fayette County selects one of its many departments to highlight for its efforts and accomplishments in serving our constituents. Unfortunately, we have discovered that many of our citizens are simply not aware of the scope and quality of the services that are being provided with their tax dollars. And unless you happen to be an elected official or employee of the organization, there are few opportunities for an individual citizen to familiarize themselves with the day-to-day operations of the various County departments. The annual department focus provides a much needed avenue for explaining what we do as well as publicizing some of the achievements of which we are very proud. With the completion of the Criminal Justice Center and the relocation of the courts and related services to the new facility, we felt that it would be appropriate to place the departmental spotlight on the Office of the Clerk of Superior Court. This office is critical to the support of the County's judicial system and to the accurate and safe maintenance of the records of the courts and other vital records of the County. For this fiscal year, the Office of the Clerk of Superior Court has been selected for review.

Introduction

The Clerk of Superior Court is an elected official that is elected by the County's voting population for a four-year term. The Clerk administers the proper registration and retention of all official documents. Civil and criminal proceedings, real estate transactions and other various vital records are among the types of documents located in the Clerk's Office.

Fayette County Clerk of Superior Court - A Historical Perspective

The Office of the Fayette County Clerk of Superior Court was established in 1830. Since the inception of the Clerk's Office, sixteen individuals have held the office of Clerk of Superior Court. The present Clerk is Sheila Studdard. Ms. Studdard took office January 1, 2001 and is the first woman to hold office of the Clerk in Fayette County.

By Georgia statute, Fayette County is mandated to hold two terms of court annually. The court terms are held in March and September. The Grand Jury meets during this period to hear evidence and indict all cases where evidence is sufficient to hold trial.

Real Estate Division

The Real Estate Division of the Superior Court is responsible for receiving, processing and the recording of all deeds and instruments relating to Fayette County property. The real estate documents handled by this division include but are not limited to warranty deed, security deeds, and quit claim deeds. Other documents processed in real estate include affidavits, assignments, transfers,

ANNUAL DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT

powers of attorney and liens. Each document or instruments is electronically indexed by grantor and grantee and then imaged for preservation of the document.

The Real Estate Division works closely with the Georgia Superior Court Clerk's Cooperative Authority. The Clerk's Authority sponsors a statewide real estate database, which is available to the general public via the World Wide Web. This website allows citizens of Georgia to locate property information without traveling to a particular county. Each county is responsible for providing the property information to the Clerk's Authority. Daily electronic transmissions by Fayette County Superior Court Clerk's Office transfer the indexed information to the statewide database.

Provisions have been made to update the current software in the Real Estate Division. The new software is web based and will allow access to the Fayette County property records through the Fayette County web site. The installation of the new software is scheduled for November 2003.

Civil Records Division

The Civil Division of the Superior Court is the division of court that has jurisdiction over such cases as civil and domestic matters, adoptions, garnishments, torts, trade name registrations, notary public commissions and various other matters. The Clerk of Superior Court is charged with maintaining each file on all court matters. The case file is housed and recorded by the Superior Court Clerk.

The files of the Civil Division were automated in January, 2003, by implementing an electronic format for docketing and maintaining the case proceedings while awaiting trial. This case management system allows the Clerk and her staff, judges and the general public to view court proceedings without pulling the actual court file. All recent proceedings have been imaged so that the proceedings may be retrieved electronically. The efficiency of the Clerk's Office has been improved by having the Court's information electronically accessible. This method of processing proceedings has reduced the need to handle the actual file, which in turn reduces the likelihood that a proceeding or file is misplaced, misfiled or lost.

The electronic file management system used by the Superior Court generates all court trial calendars from the database that contains the party information. The file management system database also allows for reports to be generated according to Judges such as pending case reports. This report is helpful for judges to maintain a current status on all assigned cases.

The Superior Court Clerk is responsible for forwarding civil case statistics to the State of Georgia. This information is electronically formatted and forwarded to the Superior Court Clerk's Cooperative Authority for distribution. Among the information collected and forwarded are the case initiation forms and the case disposition information. Effective July, 2002, the Superior Court Clerk became responsible for the collection of all information concerning temporary protective orders (TPO's) and electronically forwarding such information to the Georgia Bureau of Investigations. Information on TPO's is then entered into the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) database to be used by law enforcement officers.

ANNUAL DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT

Criminal Records Division

The Criminal Division of the Superior Court is where all criminal court records are retained for Fayette County. Under the direction of the Superior Court Clerk, Sheila Studdard, this particular section of the Clerk's Office has been modernized by use of the latest technological advances. A computerized file management system was implemented in 2002, which organized all criminal record data and placed the information at the fingertips of the Clerk and staff.

The computerized system was expanded by allowing the District Attorney's Office, the Solicitor General's Office and the Judges to access all Criminal Records. The case information contained in the case management system is used to generate all court calendars, which may vary from weekly motion days to arraignments to trials. This same case data is used to create all witness notifications and defendant subpoenas to ensure their appearance at all court proceedings.

The Clerk of Superior Court has the responsibility of reporting all case court dispositions to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC). Reporting of case dispositions has been, until recently, a time consuming manual process which requires the Clerk to report data within 30 days of defendant sentencing. A method of electronically reporting criminal case dispositions to GCIC has been implemented that takes only seconds.

Jury Records Division

The Clerk of Superior Court also serves as the Clerk to the Jury Commission. The Jury Clerk is responsible for the proper construction of the jury "box", which is a group of names that have been selected according to the most recent census to serve as both traverse and grand jurors. Once the jury "box" is created and certified, the Jury Clerk is responsible for the proper retention and maintenance of all juror service records. It is the responsibility of the jury clerk to ensure that the proper number of jurors are summoned for each week of jury trials.

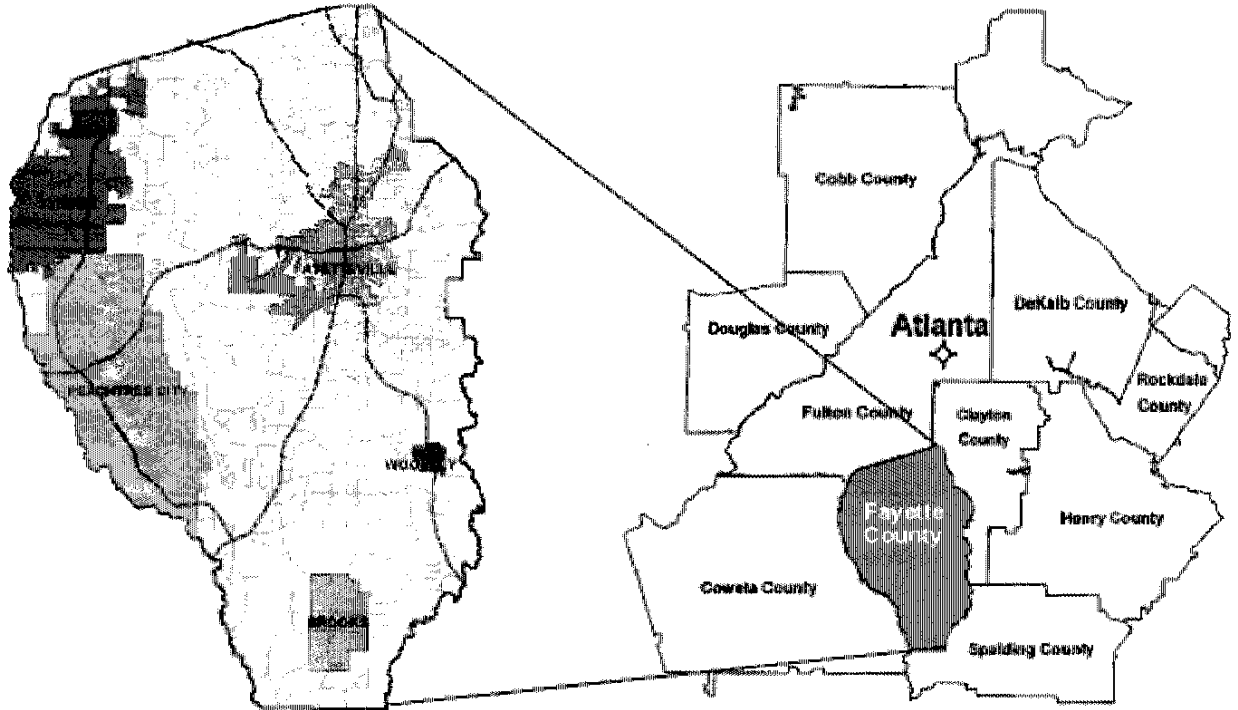
A modern and updated version of jury record maintenance software was installed in August 2001. This software allows for detailed record keeping on juror service. Any correspondence with jurors is documented and all deferrals or excuses are documented within the computer program for future reference.

Conclusion

The Fayette County Superior Court Clerk's Office is a modern and technologically advanced organization located in a modern, state-of-the-art Criminal Justice Center. The Fayette County Superior Court Clerk's Office strives for the highest quality customer service, while maintaining Fayette County court records with the utmost level of accuracy. The professionalism of the Superior Court Clerk's staff and the modern operations utilized by the Clerk's Office has established Fayette County Superior Court Clerk's Office as a benchmark standard for others to follow.

Fayette County :

Municipalities and Promixity to Metropolitan Atlanta Area



Fayette County spans 199 acres and has 5 incorporated municipalities within its boundaries. There is an estimated 99,560 people calling Fayette home today. Atlanta, with its world of shopping, dining, cultural opportunities and major league sports is just 30 minutes away.

Municipalities

FAYETTEVILLE – Fayetteville is the county seat of Fayette County and was named for Marquis de LaFayette, one of General George Washington's commanders in the Revolutionary War. The City was incorporated on December 20, 1823.

PEACHTREE CITY – PeachtreeCity was established in 1959 as a master-planned city featuring three golf courses, two lakes, a 2,200 seat amphitheater, a state-of-the-art tennis center, an indoor swimming complex and 90 miles of pedestrian and golf-cart pathways connecting all parts of the city.

Brooks – The town of Brooks is located

twelve miles south of Fayetteville and was named in 1850 for Hilary Brooks. The city was incorporated from August 3 1920 to August 16, 1913.

WOOLSEY – A small town of approximately 20 located seven miles southeast of Fayetteville. Incorporated December 15, 1893, this community was formerly located on the Southern Railroad.

TYRONE - The area in northwest Fayette County was settled in the late 1800's by Irish farmers. The town was incorporated on August 18, 1911 by railroad builders who were mainly Scotch and Irish. They had come in 1907. They named Tyrone because they thought the area reminded them of their home area around County Tyrone in Ireland.